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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted on the most probable content for a course in discipline for prospective teachers at the undergraduate and graduate level. A questionnaire, containing 34 items which might be included in a discipline course, was responded to by 713 school principals and 99 professors of secondary education. Three items upon which principals and professors agreed for an undergraduate course addressed the methodological issues of discipline techniques and management strategies: (1) including discipline for handicapped students; (2) developing a growth profile for students and associated coping strategies for teachers; and (3) managing classroom environment. Responses to content items of a graduate course found agreement on: (1) teacher characteristics and their influence on management and student behavior; (2) strategies for conducting student conferences; (3) techniques for recognizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior; and (4) techniques for developing a positive self-concept in students. Respondents agreed on the importance of student rights content in an undergraduate course; however, administrators reversed their opinion for a graduate course. Both groups agreed that classroom and school security were important for a graduate course content. The questionnaire is appended. (JD)

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Content for a Student

Discipline Course

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Abstract

This study surveyed 713 school administrators (principals) and 99 professors of secondary education nationwide to ascertain the most probable content for a course in discipline for prospective teachers. Although there was some disagreement between administrators and professors, common interest seemed to have sufficient breadth to warrant establishment of a separate course on discipline within the context of the teacher-administrator preparation curriculum. Responses of the participants also suggest designation of the content of such a course.

Content for a Student

Discipline Course

According to the most recent Gallup poll, the lack of student discipline is the most prominent problem in the nation's public schools (Gallup, 1983). The National Institute of Education found that 40 percent of the robberies and 36 percent of the assaults on urban teenagers occurred in schools (National Institute of Education, 1977). Thus, student discipline is a contemporary as well as a traditional problem in the nation's public schools. On the other hand, neither of these two studies focus on strategies for preventing or handling student inappropriate behaviors.

Although the literature has established that the problem of discipline in the schools is a crucial one, it is sketchy in regard to changes in the teacher preparation curriculum for training in discipline techniques or for the creation of separate courses to address the specific psychological, methodological, and legal issues of student discipline. According to Perry and Taylor (1982), the development of a discipline course is an absolute necessity for teachers at the preservice and inservice levels. The breadth and depth required for the proper teaching of discipline can only be accomplished through the formal structure of a course.

As well as establishing reasons for the creation of a course in discipline, Perry and Taylor suggest an outline which includes psychological and methodological content for a course which should be developed in a laboratory or classroom environment.

Another study (Surwill, 1980) consisted of a survey of 62 teachers, 8 principals, and 9 superintendents in a review of the teacher preparation program at a small college in a western state. In results that strongly supported specialized training for rural teachers, this study also found that better training was needed in handling classroom discipline relevant to various age groups.

The purpose of this study was to survey secondary school principals and professors of secondary education to ascertain contemporary opinion with respect to content for an undergraduate and graduate course in student discipline.

Procedure

Questionnaire items were developed after an informal survey of professional literature that pertained to student discipline and classroom management. The items were created from those discipline concerns that appeared most frequently in the literature. Those concerns seemed to be predominant for both teacher educators and practitioners.

The instrument was designed to ascertain the relative

importance of items of content in a hypothetical undergraduate or graduate course in student discipline. A five point Likert scale measured the continuum of importance about the items with 1 through 5 denoting strongly agree to strongly disagree, respectively (see Table 1).

A total of 2,082 survey instruments were sent to selected secondary school principals in 48 states in the United States (two states did not participate). The administrators of the selected schools were chosen by their state departments of education or if this procedure was not possible, the authors selected a random sample from the state's directory of schools. In instances where the state departments selected the schools to participate, those schools were chosen which exemplified innovation in regard to student discipline. Seven hundred and thirteen (713) or thirty-four percent (34%) of the principals in the selected schools completed and returned their questionnaires.

One hundred and sixty-eight questionnaires were sent to various professors of secondary education who are members of the Network of Secondary Education Professors. This organization annually publishes a membership roster which is distributed to the subscribers. The Network of Secondary Education Professors includes professors of

secondary education from 105 colleges and universities which are located in 38 states. Ninety-nine (59%) of the professors completed and returned their questionnaires.

The 34 items on the questionnaires received from the administrators and professors were submitted to analysis by contingency coefficient in order to establish an index of agreement between the two groups of respondents (see Table 1). The contingency coefficient, hereafter called "CC," uses the chi square (χ^2) value from a test of independence and the total number of respondents (N) in order to create the index, i.e.

$$CC = \sqrt{\chi^2 / (\chi^2 + N)}$$

The coefficient has maximum values which are determined by the number of cells in the contingency table. Guilford (1965) published a table of maximum values of CC for different numbers of categories of the contingency table. The minimum value is zero when both variables are independent. Such would occur when the strength of desire for a certain concept to be included in a discipline course had nothing to do with whether the respondents were administrators or professors. Thus, the values of CC in Tables 2 and 3 that occur between .20 and .44 indicated the strongest disagreement between the administrators and professors relevant to

how they perceive the importance of content items for a course in discipline.

The contingency coefficient was used in this study, however, to establish only a priority of agreement or disagreement between professors and administrators on the questionnaire items. The five foremost rankings for items which demonstrated agreement between administrators and professors are tabulated in Tables 2 and 3 along with five top rankings for items which demonstrated disagreement between them. The analysis was performed separately for graduate and undergraduate course content.

Results and Discussion

Results from tabulating the responses to the items in Table 1 revealed, in many instances, very low frequencies on the disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5) side of the importance continuum. These observed frequencies were low enough to cause the expected values to fall below those required for continuity of the chi square test of independence. Thus, the disagree and strongly disagree categories were merged into a single category labeled "unimportant" and recoded with the value (3) as used in Tables 2 and 3. Strongly agree and agree were also collapsed into a single category labeled "important" and recoded with the value (1) in order to balance the scale for ease of interpretation and discussion. In addition,

(2) was used to recode "undecided."

The results in Tables 2 and 3 reveal that the agree and disagree items between administrators and professors were quite different in the graduate and undergraduate environments. Disagree items in both Tables 2 and 3 showed significant chi square tests of independence. The rankings of these items were based on the largest contingency coefficients. This index indicated those items having the strongest disagreement between administrators and professors on how important they perceived those concepts for a discipline course. Moreover, the items which showed agreement had the smallest contingency coefficients.

Undergraduate

Three of the items within the content of an undergraduate course, on which administrators and professors agreed (Table 2), seemed to address the methodological issues of discipline techniques and management strategies. They were (1) discipline techniques for handicapped students; (2) developing a growth profile for students and associated coping strategies for teachers; and (3) managing the classroom environment. The most agreement surfaced on discipline techniques for the handicapped. Agreement on importance was also ascribed to course content which would contain legal aspects of

student discipline as related to students rights and case law.

Within the undergraduate curriculum, disagreement about the importance of the discipline course content occurred on five different discipline strategies (Table 3). They related to specific techniques for managing student behavior. This disagreement was manifested in a reversal of opinion between administrators and professors. The administrators demonstrated high percentages across all five management strategies in the "importance" category, whereas the professors' responses were moderated by somewhat larger percentages in the undecided and unimportant classifications.

Graduate

When responses to the content items of a graduate course were tabulated in Table 3, the principal area of agreement encompassed four of the six items in the top five ranking. These items were (1) teacher characteristics and how they might influence management and student behavior; (2) strategies for conducting student conferences; (3) techniques for recognizing and reinforcing "appropriate behavior"; and (4) techniques for developing a positive self-concept in the students that one teachers. The constructs that appear to tie these items together relate to teacher communication and personality factors as they

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might influence student-teacher relationships. It is noted that both administrators and professors exhibit considerable agreement in regard to including the topics of classroom/school security and a definition of student discipline in a discipline course.

With the exception of discipline on school busses, administrators did not rate the remaining disagree items high in regard to their importance as compared to professors. Categories reflecting undecided and no importance captured the predominance of the administrators' opinions on the disagree items.

Conclusions

Tables 2 and 3 indicate that all items to which administrators and professors agreed with respect to course content were different in regard to an undergraduate or graduate course in discipline. Also, all disagree items regarding content were different for both undergraduate and graduate courses. On the other hand, undergraduate content pertaining to student rights exhibited agreement among administrators and professors while at the graduate level the opposite occurred. It should be mentioned that administrators and professors ascribed importance to student rights content in an undergraduate course; however, administrators reversed their opinion for a graduate course.

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Both groups agreed that classroom/school security was important for graduate course content. Administrators continued to rate classroom/school security as important for an undergraduate course, whereas the professors did not consider it as important as they did at the graduate level.

Results of this survey seem to indicate that professionals who are practitioners and those engaged in teacher-administrator preparation share a commonality of opinion about the content of a course on discipline for graduates and undergraduates. Notwithstanding the areas of disagreement, this common interest appears to be of sufficient breadth to designate the possible content of a course in student discipline. Implications of this study also seem to suggest that a separate course should be established in the teacher preparation curriculum rather than attempting to infuse the course content into the framework of existing courses.

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Table 1

Content for a Student Discipline Course

Undergraduate						Graduate				
1	2	3	4	5	1. Techniques for preventing and managing "student behavior"	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. Techniques for recognizing and reinforcing "appropriate" student behavior	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. Role and responsibility of classroom teachers and school administrators	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. Managing the classroom environment	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Techniques for developing "positive self-concept" in the students that one teaches	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. Select teacher characteristics and how they might influence classroom management and student behavior	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. Writing classroom/school rules and regulations	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. Student rights and responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. Strategies for conducting teacher-student conferences	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. Strategies for conducting teacher-parent/guardian conferences	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	11. Understanding and "dealing with" various sub-cultures and associated values	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. Developing a growth and development profile of youngsters between the ages of six and eighteen and associated coping strategies for the classroom teacher	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. Student learning styles vs. teacher teaching styles and the learning process	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. Techniques for identifying potential "trouble spots" in the classroom and/or school campus	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. Discipline on school buses	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5	16. Student discipline as related to various court cases and their implications	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	17. Behavior modifications	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	18. Reality therapy	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	19. Transactional analysis	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	20. Teacher effectiveness training	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	21. Value clarification	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	22. Merit-demerit program	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	23. Listening skills for classroom teachers/school administrators	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	24. Current status of discipline in the United States	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	25. Classroom/school security	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	26. Record keeping in regard to student discipline	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	27. Physical punishment (corporal punishment)	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	28. Discipline techniques for handicapped students	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	29. Discipline techniques for emotionally disturbed youngsters	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	30. Moral reasoning	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	31. Legal aspects in regard to discipline	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	32. What is student discipline?	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	33. Punishment vs. positive approaches	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	34. Alternatives to expulsion and suspension	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	35. Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	36. Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	37. Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

*Alternatives were merged and relabeled as follows:

1 and 2 recoded as one (1) and labeled as "important"
 3 recoded as two (2) and labeled as "undecided"
 4 and 5 recoded as three (3) and labeled as "unimportant"

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Table 2

UndergraduateFive Rankings for Agreed and Disagreed on Items

Agree Items	CC	Rank	Administrators					Professors					Chi Square
			Percents			Mean	N	Percents			Mean	N	
			1	2	3			1	2	3			
Discipline techniques for handicapped students	.01	1.0	66	22	12	1.5	639	65	23	12	1.5	83	0.04
Student discipline as related to court cases and their implications	.03	2.0	62	23	15	1.5	650	58	25	18	1.6	80	0.06
Student rights and responsibilities	.04	3.0	80	13	7	1.3	673	79	12	9	1.3	86	1.00
Developing a growth and development profile of youngsters ages 6-18 and associated coping strategies for teachers	.06	4.5	55	29	16	1.6	668	54	24	23	1.7	84	2.70
Managing the classroom environment	.06	4.5	93	3	4	1.1	673	88	5	7	1.2	85	2.90

Degree Items													

Merit-demerit program	.44	1.0	85	10	5	1.2	632	25	31	43	2.2	83	172.6*
Transactional analysis	.38	2.0	85	9	6	1.2	641	34	28	38	2.0	82	122.3*
Physical punishment (corporal punishment)	.31	3.0	84	8	8	1.2	636	46	16	38	1.9	82	75.7*
Reality therapy	.30	4.0	83	8	9	1.3	647	43	28	29	1.9	83	71.0*
Classroom/school security	.26	5.0	77	14	8	1.3	643	41	31	28	1.9	83	52.7*

Note: CC denotes the contingency coefficient

* Significant chi square at .05

Table 3

GraduateFive Rankings for Agreed and Disagreed on Items

Agree Items	CC	Rank	Administrators					Professors					Chi Square
			Percents			Mean	N	Percents			Mean	N	
			1	2	3			1	2	3			
Select teacher characteristics and how they might influence management and student behavior	.03	1.0	76	15	9	1.3	645	74	19	7	1.3	74	0.85
Strategies for conducting student conferences	.04	2.5	75	17	8	1.3	659	80	13	7	1.3	70	0.90
Techniques for recognizing and reinforcing "appropriate" behavior	.04	2.5	76	14	10	1.3	642	79	10	11	1.3	73	1.20
Classroom/school security	.05	5.0	61	22	17	1.6	649	57	20	23	1.7	74	1.80
What is student discipline	.05	5.0	80	12	7	1.3	665	75	14	11	1.4	73	1.50
Techniques for developing a positive self-concept in the students that one teaches	.05	5.0	85	9	7	1.2	642	89	4	7	1.2	73	1.80

Disagree Items													

Discipline on school buses	.34	1.0	77	13	10	1.3	664	29	23	48	2.2	73	96.20*
Understanding and "dealing with various sub-cultures and associated values"	.33	2.0	29	41	29	2.0	663	85	7	8	1.2	74	91.00*
Student rights and responsibilities	.32	3.0	30	44	26	2.0	643	82	10	8	1.3	73	78.20*
Techniques for preventing and managing student misbehavior	.20	4.5	43	25	32	1.9	643	76	11	13	1.4	72	29.80*
Student learning styles vs. teacher learning styles and the learning process	.20	4.5	47	31	22	1.8	662	80	7	14	1.3	74	29.90*

Note: CC denotes the contingency coefficient

* Significant chi square at .05